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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the need for institutions to provide instruction for professional development, certification, and continuing education at remote sites. The use of the telephone conference as a delivery system is briefly described. The telelearning system used at Louisiana State University--a delivery system that allows for interaction between teacher and students, with audio and visual data to enhance learning--is then introduced. Two references are listed. (MES)

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"TELELEARNING": a Distance Education Delivery System For Staff Development

by

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"Telelearning":a Distance Education Delivery System
For Staff Development.

A memo is sent to the recently employed faculty in the department. "You are hereby requested to report to the Extramural Department to receive information regarding the course that you will be teaching away from the main facilities. Information to be addressed includes: securing an Institution vehicle; meal reimbursement; registration; facility where classes are located; lodging information; and of course, what to do if the vehicle breaks down." The common response to such a memo is heard around the world, "Do I have to go?" No! There is an alternative, and it works!

Many institutions are faced with the need to provide instruction for professional development, for certification, and for continuing education to students who would not normally have the opportunity to travel to the main site for this instruction. Over the years, it has been common to see institutional faculty deliver instruction by traveling to different sites in the surrounding geographical area. The travel related costs of meals, transportation, and lodging were generally quite modest. However, when these travel costs escalated beyond reasonable and allowable budgets, a search for alternate methods of instructional delivery was escalated.

Asimov, the great science fiction writer, once said:

> It is much simpler to transmit a message than to transmit a human being simply because he is carrying the message. There is no need to carry 70 kilograms of flesh and blood for thousands of miles when at the speed of light any message in speech, in writing, in any image, can be transmitted. The whole world becomes one with virtually zero energy expenditure compared to what would exist before the electronic age. (Kaselow, 1982 p.7)

Electronic Age Brings New Delivery Systems

New technology is providing institutions with the opportunity to experiment with many different forms of delivery systems. At times, these new developments seem so different and unique among the service deliverers. Universities with diversity use them to form a unique delivery system most appropriate for those they currently or propose to serve.

With the expanded use to the telephone, a new instructional delivery system was introduced, especially in the rural areas of the Western States. Using the telephone conference call, several students could talk simultaneous with the instructor. This provided a means by which audible interaction between student and teacher could occur over distances. Among its greatest weaknesses were the accommodation of only a few students at a time and only audible interaction. However, it did allow for some learning opportunity when distance from an educational institution was prohibitive for the student.

The telephone conference has improved with new technology that allows a bridge to monitor sound levels and make adjustments for differences in phone systems. An external mike and amplification system has added the dimension of service to many individuals at each site instead of earlier service to one or two individuals.

An Efficient Cost-effective Delivery System For Louisiana

One of the most recent new delivery systems is the Telelearning system used at Louisiana State University. This system allows the instruction to travel to many locations around Louisiana without the instructor leaving the campus. The University saves on travel related costs and at the same time provides a meaningful educational experience for those enrolled in these off campus classes.

Telelearning:

A delivery system which is fully interactive and operates in real time mode over regular voice-grade telephone lines and emphasizes learning...not teaching (McCameron, 1987 Teltrain).

Why Telelearning?

The term telelearning is chosen because of its proximity to a clear understanding of what the system does. Telelearning allows learning to take place over distances by encouraging the student to become involved using interaction and group discussions. Telelearning is a system of delivery that allows for interaction between teacher and students with audio and visual data that enhances the learning that takes place at each or every remote site. The key word is interaction, a term which includes all those things that encourage true communication to take place.

Why send the teacher long distances when the teacher can now be at the campus and teach students in several locations at the same time. It extends the teacher without the stress and strain, inconveniences, and idle time while allowing for interactive and extended learning for the student. This allows students from different locations to come together for instruction and interact without leaving their geographical area. This saves time, costs and provides instruction for two or more small groups yet forming these small groups into one larger class through telelearning. It is working at Louisiana State University. It can work for you. Yes, the instructor stays home but learning doesn't- it goes the distance!

McCameron, F.A. (1987). Teletraining at Louisiana State University. (Available from Office of the Dean, Division of Continuing Education, LSU, Baton Rouge, La. 70803.)

Optel Communications, Inc. (1985). Telewrite II PC operations manual. New York: Optel.